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December 15, 2021

Third Week of Advent Meditation

by Minister Carrole Moss, Generosity Coordinator

As we enter this season of Advent, we invite you to spend some time with your Conference Staff as we reflect on the light coming into the world.

News from the Conference Office

Disaster Relief: We Need YOUR Help

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. " (John 15:12 NRSV))

Disaster can strike with swift and sudden fury. Such was the disaster that struck last week on December 10 and 11 as multiple tornadoes tore through our region. All reports we have received so far indicate that our church buildings, congregations, and ministry settings weathered the storms relatively well. However, there is a wide path of devastation that runs through parts of Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, as well as Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, and Kentucky. Loss of life and injury, property destruction, flooding, power outages, uprooted and toppled trees, and blocked roadways were all left in the wake of these tornadoes ranked on the Enhanced Fujita Scale from EF-0 all the way up to EF-3 (wind speeds up to 165 mph).

There will be many phases to the response and recovery efforts in the communities impacted by the storms, and opportunities for different ways we can support and participate in clean-up and care. At this time, we request your assistance through gifts to the Southeast Conference UCC Disaster Relief Fund. Donations can be made on our website :

1. Visit http://www.secucc.org
2. Click on the DONATE tab at the top of the page
3. Click on blue DONATE SECURELY ONLINE button
4. Scroll to DISASTER RESPONSE (separate sections for individuals and

churches)
5. Enter the amount of your contribution
6. Hit “Continue” and fill in your donor information
7. Click “Process”

You may also send contributions via mail to

- Southeast Conference UCC
  Attn: Disaster Relief
  PO Box 1950
  Decatur GA 30031-1950

Please be sure to write “disaster relief” on the memo line!

Please pray for the survivors and those who lost loved ones in and around the Southeast Conference. And know that your generosity and outpouring of love are greatly appreciated and much needed during this time of suffering and loss.

Advent Blessings and Peace,

Rev. Kim Wood
Conference Minister

OCWM and Special Offerings Deadline

OCWM Contributions and the other Special Offerings must be received by the Conference Office by January 10, 2022, in order to be counted towards your church’s OCWM total for 2021 and "5 for 5" Status. This includes the Christmas Fund donations. Please make sure to write the check to the Southeast Conference and either include a letter or write on the memo line for which special offerings the check is intended. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org or 404-719-6572.

Communities of Practice: A Program for Clergy

For Specialized Ministers and Local Church Pastors, these covenantal groups provide support and accountability, while encouraging good habits and professional growth. Small groups (5-6) led by a trained facilitator provide a place to share resources, experiences, and encouragement in a confidential setting.

Whether you are new to ministry, new to the UCC, or have years of experience, these groups are for you! The testimonies of those involved in Communities of Practice continue to praise the impact that groups have had on the personal and professional life of ministers. “Inspirational sessions with Worship, Prayer and Fellowship... this is a time we ‘unpack our baggage’ of the clutter, as we invite Holy Spirit to fill the sacred space.” COP participant Dorinda Broadnax

For more information about Communities of Practice, see this article on our website or contact Cindy Bovee-Kemper at COPfacilitator@secucc.org with questions or to sign up.

From the Generosity Coordinator

Greetings and holiday blessings,

“Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place this way.” His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she (Mary) was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph, her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did NOT want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.”

During this season of anticipation, of Hope and Joy, God please keep all of us mindful of all the ways that we are able to be messengers of God as we open our homes, our hearts, and our resources to ensure that “ALL OF GOD’S children are served.

Let us follow the examples of Joseph in our living and in our giving. A smile, a nod, a meal, a gesture of hope and gratitude. Any gift of hope and gratitude is so appreciated by those receiving those gifts.

Let us continue to be that denomination that serves, gives, and takes care of ALL GODS CHILDREN!! WE ARE THE CHURCH❗❗

We appreciate all of you as you continue to support this Southeast Conference United Church Of Christ. As you gather with family and friends, lest we forget “GOD IS STILL SPEAKING “ and we remain Grateful!!!

Blessings of the season to all of you. May the Lord God continue to keep you and bless you in and out of season! Can't wait to be with all of you in 2022. Stay safe and take care.

Love, Peace and abundant blessings,
Min. Carrole Moss

Clergy Zoom Connections for December

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**
  Tuesday, December 21 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central); Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/479440102

Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2021. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of December 19

- Pleasant Hill Community Church; Pleasant Hill, Tennessee
- Tiffany Gibson Cox
- Eddie Colf
- Andrew Kim
- Nelson Kittle
- William Wilson Jr

Week of December 26

- Kirkwood UCC; Atlanta, GA
- Presbyterian - UCC Student Center, U of GA, Athens, GA
- Jennifer Crane
- Sarah Kim
- Karl Whiteman
- Herbert J. Carey
- Tricia Lytle

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Montgomery AL; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville TN; First United Church, Belvidere TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN; Peace Congregational, Clemson SC; Deer Lodge Congregational Church, Deer Lodge TN

News from the Wider Church

UCC Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!

Upcoming Events from the UCC

Blue Christmas Service: Dec 16, 2021 03:30 PM Eastern
Blue Christmas is a service that holds the tension of the grief and difficulty of the season for many, in tension and awareness of the societal messages that Christmas is a season of ONLY JOY—at the expense of all other feelings and circumstances. REGISTER

Hymn Sing! Dec 21, 2021 03:30 PM Eastern
Join the UCC as we gather together to listen to the music of advent and Christmas, sing along, and close the year off together! You are welcome to dress up and "show off" your Christmas spirit throughout the program. We are looking forward to being together digitally once again this year.
REGISTER

New date set for last Amistad Chapel worship service

The United Church of Christ national setting is not quite ready to say farewell to Amistad Chapel. The chapel's last worship service, originally slated for Dec. 4, at 2:30 ET, has now been moved to the second Sunday in March, March 13, 2022, which is traditionally Amistad Sunday. The final service of celebration in the Amistad Chapel will be a tribute to the denomination's first three decades of mission and ministry in Cleveland. Read more on the UCC website.

Church Reliance on Volunteers: A Legal Perspective

It is common practice for churches to utilize the services of volunteers, church members, and parishioners for a wide variety of church needs. Churches often rely on volunteers for their contributions and work with construction, repair, maintenance, cleaning and janitorial, information technology, office, and chaperone tasks and services. Volunteer service is

indeed an essential element of a church's operations.

However, when calling upon volunteers to perform a task for the church, it is important that church leadership understand the legal implications of their reliance on volunteer service. As with work that a paid church employee conducts on behalf of the church, volunteer church work is not without potential risk to the church. This article explores the risks that churches assume when they use volunteers for their church operations.

Read more about this, and other interesting topics, in the Fall-Winter 2021 Issue of The Steward from Insurance Board.

Trainings and Conferences

BRCC Winter Youth Retreat~ January 14-17, 2022

With continued COVID-19 mitigation efforts, the efforts of our churches, and the staff at the Blowing Rock Conference Center, we are pleased to announce that we will be holding WYR 2022. This year's theme and conversations will be focusing on our relationship with the earth and how God calls for us to care for all creation.

Our friends from Alathea will be joining us for a weekend of storytelling,

experiential education, service, and of course fun in the snow on January 14-17, 2022. Registration is now open. Group Leaders, please click here to register your full group. Group leaders, please click here to enter your participant's information. (Both forms need to be completed and ONE check mailed to BRCC.)

The early registration fee until December 1, 2021, is $185.00. All registrations after December 1, 2021, will be $200.00. We look forward to seeing you on the mountain. https://www.uccwinteryouthretreat.org/

Worship Design Studio Announces Lent 2022 Series

Marcia McFee and the Worship Design Studio have announced their Lenten theme for 2022. "Good Enough: Embracing the Imperfection of Life and Faith" is the new fully-scripted worship series, inspired by Kate Bowler's new devotional book with Jessica Richie that is scheduled for release in February 2022. The series is planned for release by the end of 2021. Learn more at worshipdesignstudio.com.

Job Opening

Associate Director for Refugee and Immigrant Response

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has an opening for an Associate Director for Refugee and Immigrant Response. This senior level position, reporting to the Executive Director, will develop, coordinate, and implement a domestic refugee ministry. Learn more on their website.

Conference Calendar

December 21 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

December 24, 2021 - January 2, 2022
Office Closed for Christmas

January 4, 2022 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

January 11, 2022 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

January 13, 2022 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST
Board of Directors Meeting

January 18, 2022 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

January 20, 2022 @ 12:00 pm - 12:30 pm EST
Live Harp Meditations for Ministers

View the **full calendar** of events online: https://www.secucc.org/events/

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Kim Wood;** kwood@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh;** hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss;** cmoss@secucc.org

Director of Communications: **Don Harris;** dharris@secucc.org

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